DISEC Committee Study Guide

Frameworks to Prevent Non-State Actors from Possessing Weapons of Mass Destruction (WMDs)

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Letter from the Chair

En garde, delegates!

Welcome to the Disarmament and International Security Committee (DISEC) at the Kanakia International School MUN! I'm Aaira Shah, your chair for this thrilling journey, and I can already tell this is going to be a committee that demands sharp intellect, quick thinking, and a deep understanding of global security. The agenda we're about to dive into—**Frameworks to Prevent Non-State Actors from Possessing Weapons of Mass Destruction**—couldn't be more relevant in today's world.

Before we begin, I urge you all to embrace the gravity of this issue. We're not just talking about policy tweaks or minor security threats. We're dealing with a world where terrorists, rogue militias, and insurgent groups could wield the power to level cities, wipe out populations, or incite mass chaos using WMDs. This is not just a theoretical discussion. It's real, it's happening, and the stakes couldn't be higher.

As your chair, I expect nothing less than full commitment and creativity. Your debates should be fierce yet respectful, your arguments well-researched, and your diplomacy razor-sharp. You will be defending the world from a catastrophe, and every idea you put forth could shape the global response to one of the greatest threats of our time.

Prepare your notes, sharpen your rhetoric, and get ready for a rollercoaster of a committee. We need you at your best to confront these challenges head-on, because in the world of WMDs, there's no room for hesitation.

Good luck, delegates. The future is in your hands—make it count.

Yours in anticipation,
Aaira Shah
Chair, DISEC
Kanakia International School MUN

Letter from the Co-Chair

Greetings, delegates!

Greetings from the UN's 'First Committee', the Disarmament and International Security Committee (DISEC) at the Kanakia International School MUN 2024! My name's Aarav Reddy, and as your assistant director, I'm looking forward to seeing where your ideas lead us as we address the significant—and occasionally terrifying—agenda of, "Frameworks to Prevent Non-State Actors from Possessing Weapons of Mass Destruction." It sounds intense, doesn't it? That's true, but don't panic—we've got this!

The world is evolving quickly, and non-state actors—that is, organisations that function outside of established political systems—become a serious threat in terms of armaments capable of doing immense havoc. Our role? Determine a way to prevent something disastrous from occurring. No pressure!

You'll have the opportunity to imagine yourself in the position of global leaders over the next few days, brainstorm solutions, and perhaps even forge allies in the process. Never forget that the best ideas frequently originate from unexpected sources, so don't be scared to think creatively.

Let's have fun, stay sharp, and make some progress on this critical issue. I'm looking forward to seeing what you bring to the table—just no WMDs, please!

Good luck, delegates. The future is in your hands—make it count.

Best Regards,
Aarav Reddy
Co-Chair, DISEC
Kanakia International School MUN

Introduction to the Agenda

The proliferation of Weapons of Mass Destruction (WMDs) to non-state actors poses a grave threat to international peace and security. WMDs—whether nuclear, chemical, biological, or radiological—are designed to inflict catastrophic damage, resulting in widespread destruction, loss of life, and severe environmental consequences. Traditionally, these weapons were under the exclusive control of nation-states, governed by international treaties and regulatory bodies such as the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) and the Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW).

In recent years, however, the risk of non-state actors acquiring WMDs has escalated due to several factors: the weakening of state control in conflict zones, the rise of transnational terrorist organisations, the accessibility of advanced technologies, and the black-market sale of WMD components through the dark web. Non-state actors, including terrorist groups, insurgent organisations, and criminal networks, now have unprecedented means to acquire, develop, or use WMDs.

This study guide seeks to explore frameworks that can be implemented to address this pressing issue, examining the role of international law, multilateral cooperation, and the monitoring of technological developments. The challenge is multifaceted and requires a comprehensive approach that addresses both prevention and response.

Context

Weapons of Mass Destruction have long been recognized as some of the most dangerous and destructive tools of war. Their proliferation is a concern that dates back to the early Cold War period when nuclear weapons first emerged as a central focus of global disarmament efforts. However, while early non-proliferation

meworks focused primarily on nation-states, the global security landscape has shifted dramatically in the 21st century.

Non-state actors, unlike nation-states, are not constrained by formal international agreements or diplomatic norms. They operate outside the boundaries of international law, often motivated by ideologies that disregard global peace or the sanctity of civilian life. Terrorist organisations, in particular, have demonstrated a willingness to use extreme measures to achieve their goals, as seen in numerous global attacks over the past two decades.

Furthermore, the nature of warfare and conflict has changed. Asymmetric warfare, characterised by conflicts between states and non-state actors, has become more prevalent. In these conflicts, traditional military superiority offers limited advantages, leading some groups to seek unconventional weapons to level the playing field. The rise of failed states and regions with minimal governance, such as Syria, Libya, and parts of Sub-Saharan Africa, has created an environment conducive to the acquisition of WMDs by non-state actors.

These developments have underscored the importance of reinforcing international mechanisms that can prevent non-state actors from obtaining these devastating weapons.

Timeline of Key Events

- **1995: Tokyo Subway Sarin Gas Attack**
  Aum Shinrikyo, a Japanese doomsday cult, carried out a sarin gas attack on the Tokyo subway system, killing 13 people and injuring over 1,000. This event marked one of the first large-scale uses of chemical weapons by a non-state actor in a civilian context, highlighting the vulnerabilities that exist in highly developed nations.

- **2001: Anthrax Attacks in the United States**
  In the aftermath of the 9/11 attacks, anthrax spores were mailed to several U.S. government offices and media outlets, resulting in five deaths. These attacks

underscored the ease with which biological agents could be weaponized and the difficulties in tracing the source.

- **2006: Al-Qaeda's Nuclear Aspirations**
  Intelligence reports surfaced indicating that Al-Qaeda had made several attempts to acquire nuclear materials. Though unsuccessful, these efforts showed the global community the extent to which non-state actors were willing to go to obtain WMDs.

- **2014: ISIS Gains Control of Chemical Weapons in Syria**
  Amid the Syrian Civil War, ISIS took control of chemical weapons facilities previously held by the Assad regime. Though international intervention prevented large-scale use of these weapons, ISIS's possession of such materials set a dangerous precedent for terrorist groups accessing state-controlled WMDs.

- **2020: Dark Web Proliferation of WMD Components**
  A surge in the sale of WMD components, including radiological materials and chemical precursors, on dark web platforms was reported by global law enforcement agencies. This phenomenon has raised alarms about the role of technology in facilitating the spread of WMDs and the difficulty of regulating online markets.

Stakeholders in focus

The issue of non-state actors possessing WMDs affects a wide range of stakeholders. Each group has different concerns and interests, but the overarching goal of preventing these weapons from falling into the wrong hands unites the international community.

Nation-States:
The primary stakeholders are nation-states, particularly those that possess WMDs or related technologies. Countries with advanced nuclear, chemical, and biological capabilities bear the responsibility of safeguarding these assets to prevent their proliferation. Additionally, states in conflict zones, such as Syria, Afghanistan, and

...oya, face heightened risks due to weakened governance and the presence of non-state actors.

International Organisations:

International regulatory bodies such as the IAEA, OPCW, and the United Nations play a crucial role in monitoring WMD proliferation and enforcing global disarmament treaties. These organisations must continuously adapt to the evolving threat posed by non-state actors, developing new tools and strategies for verification and enforcement.

Private Sector:

Industries involved in the production, storage, and transport of sensitive materials—such as chemicals, pharmaceuticals, and nuclear technologies—are key stakeholders. Private sector companies are increasingly recognized as potential targets for theft or sabotage by non-state actors, necessitating greater collaboration between businesses and governments.

Civil Society:

Civil society, including humanitarian organisations and civilians themselves, stands to suffer the most from any WMD attack. The use of these weapons in densely populated areas would have catastrophic humanitarian consequences, displacing populations, creating long-term health crises, and destabilising entire regions.

Case studies in focus

The issue of non-state actors acquiring Weapons of Mass Destruction (WMDs) is a multifaceted challenge that impacts global security on many levels. The complexity of this threat is best understood through specific case studies that highlight various aspects of the issue, including failed states, the role of international technology, and geopolitical dynamics.

The Dark Web and WMD Sales: A Growing Marketplace

In recent years, the proliferation of WMD components through the dark web has become one of the most pressing concerns in the realm of global security. The dark

web—an encrypted, often anonymous portion of the internet—is notoriously difficult to regulate. It provides a platform for black-market exchanges, including the sale of chemical precursors, radiological materials, and biological agents.

One notable instance occurred in 2020, when Europol uncovered an extensive network selling radioactive materials online. This network operated across multiple countries in Eastern Europe, including Ukraine, Romania, and Moldova. These materials could have been used to construct "dirty bombs"—radiological weapons designed to cause mass panic and contaminate large urban areas. While Europol's operation successfully shut down the network, the incident exposed the weaknesses in global cyber governance and the difficulty in tracking illegal transactions in the digital sphere.

Countries with unstable political landscapes or poor cyber-regulatory frameworks, such as parts of Eastern Europe and the Middle East, are particularly vulnerable to such activities. For these nations, the challenge lies in balancing the development of legitimate technologies, such as nuclear power, with the need for tight security protocols to prevent material theft by non-state actors.

The Syrian Civil War: Chemical Weapons in the Hands of Non-State Actors

Syria has been a hotbed of instability since the outbreak of civil war in 2011. One of the most alarming aspects of the conflict was the potential for non-state actors, including the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS), to gain control of the Syrian government's chemical weapons stockpiles. In 2013, the Syrian government was accused of using chemical weapons against civilians, prompting global outrage and intervention efforts to dismantle the Assad regime's chemical arsenal.

Despite international efforts, several reports emerged in 2014 and 2015 that suggested ISIS had acquired chemical weapons, such as mustard gas, from Syrian stockpiles. These weapons were reportedly used in small-scale attacks against both Kurdish forces and civilian populations in northern Syria and Iraq. The destabilisation in the region allowed non-state actors to access these weapons, demonstrating how quickly WMDs can fall into the wrong hands when state control collapses.

This case underscores the importance of strong governance and international oversight in conflict zones. The Syrian Civil War illustrates how non-state actors can take advantage of power vacuums to acquire dangerous weapons, posing a threat not just to regional stability, but to global security.

Al-Qaeda's Nuclear Aspirations and Pakistan's Vulnerability

Al-Qaeda has long expressed interest in obtaining nuclear materials, with intelligence reports dating back to the early 2000s suggesting that the terrorist organisation sought to build or acquire a "dirty bomb." Al-Qaeda's attempts were largely focused on Pakistan, a nuclear-armed state that has struggled with internal instability due to insurgencies, political corruption, and the presence of extremist groups.

In 2003, a Pakistani nuclear scientist was detained on suspicion of providing Al-Qaeda with nuclear know-how. While these attempts were ultimately unsuccessful, they highlight the risks faced by nuclear-armed states with internal security challenges. Pakistan's struggle to maintain control over its nuclear assets has raised global concerns about the potential for non-state actors to infiltrate nuclear facilities or obtain sensitive materials through corruption and bribery.

Pakistan has since implemented stricter measures to safeguard its nuclear arsenal, but it remains a focus of international attention. The global community, particularly the United States, has provided technical and financial support to ensure Pakistan's nuclear security. However, the country's political instability remains a source of concern, with analysts pointing out that any future breakdown in governance could potentially lead to WMDs being compromised.

North Korea and Proliferation Networks: The Role of Rogue States

North Korea's nuclear proliferation activities have made it a central player in the global WMD narrative, not only as a nation-state developing these weapons but also as a potential supplier to non-state actors. The infamous case of the **A.Q. Khan Network**—a clandestine operation run by a Pakistani nuclear scientist—revealed that North Korea had been a recipient of nuclear technology, while also indicating that North Korea could act as a source for selling such technology to rogue actors.

Although North Korea maintains strict state control over its nuclear program, the risk remains that the regime, under pressure from sanctions or isolation, could be tempted to sell its technology to the highest bidder, whether that be another state or a non-state actor. This has raised alarm bells in regions vulnerable to terrorist activity, particularly in Southeast Asia and the Middle East, where North Korea has historically sold conventional arms to insurgent groups.

Concluding remarks

The issue of non-state actors acquiring WMDs represents a profound and evolving challenge to global security. As technology advances and global conflicts persist, the risk that non-state actors will gain access to WMDs increases. Effective international cooperation, robust regulatory frameworks, and enhanced monitoring are essential to preventing this dangerous scenario. This committee will play a critical role in exploring potential solutions, drawing from historical examples, current frameworks, and emerging challenges.

Delegates are expected to engage critically with these issues, formulating comprehensive solutions that can balance state sovereignty with the need for global security. The future depends on our ability to prevent the world's most dangerous weapons from falling into the wrong hands.

Possible Solutions

1. **Strengthening International Cooperation:** Greater cooperation between states and international organisations such as the IAEA and the UN Office for Disarmament Affairs (UNODA) is essential for monitoring and controlling the movement of WMD components.
2. **Improved Cybersecurity Measures:** Tackling the dark web's role in the sale of WMDs is vital. Governments and tech companies must work together to shut down these markets and enhance monitoring technologies.

3. **Tightening Border Controls:** Increased security and surveillance at border crossings can prevent the smuggling of dangerous materials. International efforts must focus on regions with weak governance where these materials are most likely to be smuggled.

4. **Education and Awareness:** Educating civilians and industries about the dangers of WMD proliferation, especially in conflict zones, can help prevent inadvertent sales or transportation of dangerous materials.

Role of Global Players

United States

As a leading military and diplomatic power, the United States has played a central role in shaping global non-proliferation frameworks, particularly after the Cold War. The U.S. has led efforts to dismantle WMD programs through initiatives such as the Nunn-Lugar Cooperative Threat Reduction (CTR) program, which has successfully decommissioned thousands of nuclear warheads and chemical weapons across former Soviet states. The U.S. remains a critical player in preventing non-state actors from obtaining WMDs, primarily through its intelligence networks, counterterrorism operations, and financial sanctions targeting terrorist organizations and states that sponsor them.

In recent years, the U.S. has been heavily involved in countering the threat of WMD proliferation in regions destabilized by conflict, particularly in the Middle East. Its role in Syria, where it led efforts to dismantle the Assad regime's chemical weapons arsenal under the framework of the Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC), demonstrated its capacity to enforce international agreements. However, concerns remain about how non-state actors such as ISIS were able to gain access to chemical weapons in the first place, highlighting gaps in global enforcement.

The U.S. also has significant domestic measures in place to prevent WMDs from falling into the hands of terrorists, including strict export controls, enhanced border

curity, and partnerships with the private sector to monitor dual-use technologies. However, the U.S. has faced criticism for its withdrawal from key arms control treaties, such as the Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces (INF) Treaty, which has raised concerns about the erosion of global arms control norms.

Russia

Russia, as a major military power and the legal successor to the Soviet Union, inherited one of the largest stockpiles of nuclear, chemical, and biological weapons in the world. Russia has been both a key partner and an obstacle in global efforts to prevent WMD proliferation to non-state actors. On the one hand, it has collaborated with international organizations to secure WMD materials, particularly in the post-Soviet space, where poorly guarded stockpiles have posed a serious threat. Through initiatives like the Global Partnership Against the Spread of Weapons and Materials of Mass Destruction, Russia has worked with other nations to safeguard nuclear materials from falling into terrorist hands.

However, Russia's geopolitical maneuvers and strategic partnerships with regimes accused of sponsoring terrorism—such as Syria and Iran—have complicated its role. The 2018 chemical weapons attack in Salisbury, UK, allegedly orchestrated by Russian operatives using Novichok, further damaged Russia's credibility as a responsible player in the fight against WMD proliferation. Its close ties with Syrian President Bashar al-Assad, whose regime was responsible for multiple chemical attacks during the civil war, have been condemned by the international community.

Nevertheless, Russia continues to play an influential role within the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) and remains a key actor in arms control negotiations, including those aimed at preventing non-state actors from acquiring WMDs.

China

China's role in the global non-proliferation landscape has grown significantly in recent decades as it continues to expand its influence on the international stage. As a permanent member of the United Nations Security Council (P5), China has supported numerous resolutions aimed at controlling the spread of WMDs,

cluding sanctions against North Korea's nuclear program and efforts to combat the proliferation of chemical and biological weapons.

China's approach to non-state actors and WMDs, however, is often seen through the lens of its broader strategic interests. China is particularly concerned about the proliferation of WMDs in its neighborhood, especially given its proximity to North Korea. It has advocated for diplomacy and engagement to resolve WMD-related crises, particularly on the Korean Peninsula. China has also increased its participation in global arms control initiatives, such as the Missile Technology Control Regime (MTCR), to prevent the spread of missile technology to rogue actors.

Domestically, China faces significant challenges in ensuring that advanced technologies, including those that could be used in WMDs, do not fall into the hands of terrorist groups. China has strengthened its export controls and cooperation with global counterterrorism efforts, although concerns remain about the country's enforcement capabilities. Furthermore, China's burgeoning private sector, especially in areas like biotechnology and artificial intelligence, poses a potential risk if not properly regulated, as dual-use technologies could be exploited by non-state actors.

United Kingdom and France (P5 Members)

The United Kingdom and France, both nuclear powers and permanent members of the Security Council, play a vital role in the global non-proliferation regime. As major proponents of arms control and disarmament, both countries have invested heavily in ensuring that WMD materials do not fall into the hands of non-state actors.

The UK, particularly after the Salisbury Novichok attack, has taken a firm stance against state-sponsored proliferation, calling for stronger global enforcement mechanisms. It has worked closely with NATO and the European Union to strengthen counterterrorism operations and intelligence sharing. The UK's role in combating WMD proliferation also extends to its robust financial sanctions programs, which target entities involved in the production or distribution of WMD materials.

France, with its own advanced nuclear capabilities, has been a consistent advocate for non-proliferation and disarmament. France's diplomatic influence within the European Union has made it a key player in shaping the bloc's approach to WMD-related threats, particularly in addressing the threat posed by non-state actors in conflict zones like the Sahel region in Africa, where terrorist groups linked to al-Qaeda and ISIS operate. France has also played a significant role in peacekeeping and counterterrorism operations in the region, where the risk of WMD proliferation is growing.

Other Key Players

India

India, though not a P5 member, is a nuclear power with significant geopolitical influence in South Asia. India's focus on counterterrorism is particularly relevant to WMD non-proliferation, given the presence of non-state actors within its own region. The country has been actively involved in securing its nuclear arsenal and preventing terrorist organisations from gaining access to nuclear materials. Its cooperation with the U.S. on nuclear security has been a hallmark of its non-proliferation efforts.

Israel

Israel, although not officially recognized as a nuclear state, plays a significant role in the Middle East's security landscape. With frequent threats from non-state actors such as Hezbollah and Hamas, Israel is deeply invested in preventing the spread of WMDs. Its intelligence capabilities, particularly through Mossad, have been instrumental in disrupting potential WMD-related threats from non-state actors and hostile states.

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treaties, resolutions, and reports on preventing the proliferation of WMDs.
Website: https://www.un.org/disarmament

2. **Nuclear Threat Initiative** (**NTI**)
A comprehensive resource for information on global nuclear and biological threats, including non-state actors and their potential access to WMDs.
Website: https://www.nti.org

3. **The Chemical Weapons Convention** (**CWC**)
The full text of the international treaty aimed at eliminating chemical weapons and preventing their spread to state and non-state actors.
Website: https://www.opcw.org/chemical-weapons-convention

4. **The Biological Weapons Convention** (**BWC**)
A key treaty prohibiting the development, production, and stockpiling of biological weapons.
Website: https://www.un.org/disarmament/biological-weapons

5. **The United States Department of State – Counterterrorism and WMDs**
U.S. policy documents on efforts to prevent WMD proliferation to non-state actors, including terrorist groups.
Website: https://www.state.gov

6. **The Global Partnership Against the Spread of Weapons and Materials of Mass Destruction**
An international initiative focused on securing WMD materials and preventing them from falling into the hands of non-state actors.
Website: https://www.gpwmd.com

7. **Center for Strategic and International Studies** (**CSIS**)
In-depth analyses on international security issues, including case studies on WMD proliferation and the role of non-state actors.
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8. **International Atomic Energy Agency** (**IAEA**)
The IAEA plays a critical role in monitoring nuclear materials and preventing their misuse by both state and non-state actors.
Website: https://www.iaea.org

9. **Reports from the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons** (**OPCW**)

Official reports and updates on global chemical weapons issues, including investigations into non-state actors' use of chemical weapons.

Website: https://www.opcw.org

10. **The Arms Control Association (ACA)**

    Research and policy advocacy on arms control and non-proliferation, including WMDs and non-state actor threats.

    Website: https://www.armscontrol.org

11. **The Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI)**

    An independent resource for research on global arms control, WMD proliferation, and security issues related to non-state actors.

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